

A B S T R A C T

Starting as humble suppliants for trade, the British succeeded in over-running India by exploiting cleavages among the Indians themselves. However, the British imperialism, by spreading the western ideas, techniques, and institutions inadvertently fulfilled the historic function of communicating enough dynamism into the Indian people to spell the doom of imperialism itself. The Indian National Congress, an officially sponsored organization created to ensure 'encapsulation' of native discontent, under its post-liberal vernacular elite leadership and the charismatic spell of Gandhiji, assumed the role of a mass nationalist organization mobilizing native discontent into a popular national movement. The factors generated by the first world war immensely contributed to the strength of the mounting nationalist pressures and impelled Mr. Montagu's policy statement of August 20, 1917, promising 'gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to progressive realization of responsible government in India.' In the changed setting the British pursued a policy which ingeniously combined 'responses' — like constitutional concessions and governmental reforms — with 'repression'; a policy of an iron hand in a velvet glove.'

Between the two world wars the British ingenuity was fully engaged in devising reform schemes which would reconcile

the contradictory objectives of safeguarding the imperial interests and pacifying the nationalist demands. Thus the principle of 'gradual development' ensured an indefinitely prolonged and piece meal implementation of the avowed objective of responsible government. The principle earmarking Provinces as 'the areas wherein the process of responsible government would be initiated' confined the reforms to the provincial spheres and sought to divert the attention of the people from the highest fortress - the Centre - 'to the less important provincial posts', and the strait-jacket principle of overall governmental responsibility of the Governor, as chief executive of highly effective provincial bureaucratic structure, to the Governor General, who in turn remained accountable to the British Government, rendered the responsible governmental institutions, and their underlying principle of popular accountability, incongruous and meaningless. Under the reforms of 1919 and 1935 subjugation of Provinces - the areas wherein the responsible government was initiated - to the Centre was accomplished through the instrumentality of 'division of power.' By manipulating, both at the provincial and the Central levels, the horizontal or 'capital' division of power, the British secured over-riding legislative, administrative and financial powers in the hands of the Governors and the Governor-General. The vertical or areal division of power between the Centre and the Provinces, on the other hand, was designed to provide for a strong Centre.

It is the study of this device of division of power (under the Acts of 1919 and 1935) which constitutes the main theme of the present dissertation. However, in view of the causal relationship obtaining between the reforms and the national movement, this study has been pursued in the context of the nationalist pressures and the imperial policy in regard to them.

Though primarily devised to serve imperial interests, the scheme of division of power between the Centre and the Provinces elaborated under the Act of 1935, proved to be probably the most important survival from the past in the Constitution of free India. Apart from its colonial manipulations which, ~~was~~ by and large, were executed by tempering with the horizontal dimension of the instrumentality of division of power at the Central and the provincial levels, the scheme of vertical division of power between the Centre and the units providing for a strong Centre, had much to commend itself to the requirements of the plural Indian society. Stripped of its colonial provisions which were inconsistent with India's sovereignty and democratic set up, the 1935 scheme of division of power furnished the statutory base for the establishment of a 'cooperative-federalism' in free India.